



A VERDAD DÓL PUE-FAVA  
DE ALGO MÁS EMOCIONANTE

## **A Verdade Dói, Precisava de Algo Mais Emocionante by mileventhdoctor**

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**Summary:** John wants nothing more than to find love, but not just with anybody...Someone special, someone who he had fallen hopelessly in love with. But what do you do when you've convinced yourself that your only chance at happiness is in the arms of an A-list celebrity, or in this case Millie Bobby Brown? Join John on a journey of not only love and heartbreak, but self-love and self-care.

## 1. Not Your Average John

(The title's in Portuguese, but it translates to "Truth Hurts, Needed Something More Exciting" and the actual story's in English; TRIGGER WARNING: Story centers around a depressed individual. This includes references to suicidal thoughts, but very mild and no gore.)

**Author's Note:** There are two possible endings. It's up to you to decide how the story ends. Also, this story is dedicated to my best guy friend, John. Happy Belated Birthday and sorry for taking so long to put this together for you! You've been very patient. I hope you will find this story enlightening and that it will give you the closure you need while also letting you live out your wildest fantasies! Also, happy actual birthday to my ibf, Olivia! I love you more than words can say, girl! I hated that I wasn't able to get this out in time for John's actual birthday because of how insanely busy I've been with school, but it kind of worked out because now it can also serve as my birthday present to you! I did write myself into this story and I tried my best to eliminate bias and not make it come off like I was praising myself. I'm no savior. I was simply just trying to demonstrate how close John and I really are and how our friendship is an important part in both of our lives. I based the things I said about myself solely on things that he has actually said to me and I hope that translates through my story and doesn't come off like I'm being conceited. I would never want anyone to think that.

Weeks ago, I flew over to Brazil to visit with family. It was truly an amazing trip. I saw some of the most beautiful sights, things I'd never seen back home, but sometimes that was easy to forget. I was distracted, you see. I was completely hijacked by my feelings, feelings I couldn't get rid of, feelings so intense I didn't know what to do with them. These feelings were love. These feelings were for Millie Bobby Brown. (I'm sure you've heard of her before.)

It all started 4 years back. As I was watching Modern Family, a little girl with brown hair and big, brown eyes caught my attention. She

might just sound like any other girl to you, probably that basic brunette girl you sit next to in math class, but to me, she was everything. She played a small part, nothing too special. Lizzie was her name I believe, but only a year later I would come to find her again, the lead of her own show- Stranger Things.

Even with her hair buzzed to the scalp, I recognized her from the very moment I saw her and that was when I knew. That was when I knew that it was love at first sight.

Her character, Eleven, had been experimented on in a lab her whole life until finally making an escape and being found in the woods by a boy around the same age as her. It was for that reason that she rarely spoke a word the entire season, as she had not been consistently taught English, nor social cues, being isolated in the environment that she was. Somehow she conveyed so much by saying so little. It was all in those lovely eyes of hers. I was mesmerized at how her expressions could be so simple yet so powerful.

It became clear to me and everyone watching that the boy that found Eleven had feelings for her, just as I do for Millie. Later, he even attempted to explain his feelings to her and kissed her for clarification...and because he wanted to, of course.

But that boy that found her, that boy that took her into his home and fed and clothed her- I desperately wanted to be that boy. For the longest time, I found myself empathizing with him a lot and I couldn't put my finger on why. That was it. That was why. I wanted what he had. He had Millie and not directly, I know. Mike was just as much a character as Eleven was and Millie's not Eleven, but playing Mike allowed Finn to be close to her and that was all I wanted.

Mike and Eleven were a match made in heaven. I wanted that kind of love with Millie. Even though Finn was the one who got to be with Millie, I didn't want to be him. I wanted to be Millie's Mike.

She practically got famous overnight. You'd have to be living under a rock not to know about Stranger Things. It was the biggest hit Netflix had ever seen! It had everything you could think of- teen leads played by teen actors, nostalgia, sci-fi, horror, comedy, romance, strong friendships, the list goes on. It was practically meant to be

binge-watched! As it got bigger, she did too. Soon enough she became a household name. I loved watching her success. She was so talented. She was good at everything she did. She could act, she could sing, she could rap! She took up modeling, was named one of Times 100's most influential people, became a UNICEF ambassador, and most recently, designed a line of converses, started her own brand and partnered with Pandora Jewelry. I mean, really, what couldn't she do?!

I needed her more than I could say. I'd reached out to her in her DMs, but she never replied or even noticed my messages. A part of me knew I'd never get to meet her or interact with her in any type of way, but a part of me believed it could happen to.

I know it's crazy, believe me. I mean, she's way out of my league. She doesn't even know me! I'm not anything special. I'm nothing, ask anyone! People at school have started calling me "sad boy John" because I'm always depressed, always stuck on Millie, always thinking about her every second of every day, and torturing myself with possibilities that I know are too far out of my reach, but I can't help myself. Every song I listen to- Millie, every dream I have- Millie, every time I see the number 11- Millie. Millie, Millie, Millie. Just her and nothing but.

I'm a hopeless romantic. I'm desperately in love with someone who doesn't know I exist. I'm lonely. I'm just a broken shell of a man. The only person who thinks otherwise is my best friend, Kate. She's always been there for me, from the start. We met in a roleplay group chat weeks ago. She was Mike and I was Jonathan, and there were many times where I was gonna let go, where I was gonna let my dark thoughts get the best of me, times where I wanted to end it all and I was actually going to, but she wouldn't let me.

I remember there was this one night when everything went wrong, when all shit went down and all hell broke loose. I remember it like it was yesterday because every day is a constant struggle for survival when you're me. I wish I was kidding, but it's the truth. I was deeply depressed and when I get deeply depressed, when I get myself worked up, when I let my thoughts consume me, I often pass out. The other people in the group chat knew this and they would tell me to sit down, drink some water, and breathe in and out. Those three

phrases became so familiar to me. I did as they said and while it helped, it didn't make any of my pain go away and so I started saying these things, these horrible, terrible things about how I didn't see a point, about how I had no purpose, about how I had lost all hope. I wasn't aware of how deeply my words could affect others around me. I mean, it was just a group chat after all. I had never met these people, how could I matter to them? But boy, was I wrong...

The more that I said, the worse that it got. I could feel the tension of the conversation pressing on my temples and forehead. As my head ached with regret, I realized it was too late. I couldn't take it back. And I watched as a girl- almost 5 years younger than I- started to spiral too. She started to give up, started to lose hope that I had already lost. She too was depressed. She had somehow latched onto my wavelength and I knew it was happening, but I couldn't stop it, as I was too blind to my own pain to change her mind. I wasn't thinking clearly, neither of us were, but somehow it felt so right. I was ready to die and she thought she was ready too. I had my hand on the blade and everything, but my phone wouldn't stop lighting up. Our friends, they spammed us with messages until they knew we were okay. I was so close, but I couldn't do it and neither could she.

My friends sat behind their phone screens, panicking at whatever ungodly hour it was, but we came back. We couldn't go through with it and we told them that. Oh, how I wish I could've seen the relief on their faces! I know it must've been quite something, but I learned that night, that I did have people who cared about me, even if I had never actually met them. Then, not long after that, a prank was played that went so terribly wrong and caused more stress on all of us, both the pranked and prankers, but then something amazing happened! We all apologized and somehow, it brought us all closer together. We had been through so much that one night, that a bond formed between us in a way that we never thought it could.

Ever since that night, we never were able to revive our role play. Everyone was too busy or not in the mood to play, but our love for each other never faded and if it weren't for all of that, I never would've met Kate.

Over the course of a few weeks, she and I started talking for hours on end. We started talking about my feelings. She always had a good

sense of how to deal with them and helped me analyze them in a way I had always struggled to do. She understood better than I did in ways that I didn't understand, that I still don't understand. All I know is that she's seen it before. She doesn't have depression, that I do know. She's way too happy and optimistic to feel like that, but she has dull days, days where she feels really down and blue and doesn't know how to cope. I know because I've seen it before. She opened up to me and I learned that we're more alike than I thought. We're both just as lonely, battling our own personal struggles every day at a time.

Sometimes it feels like she's the only one who understands. She helps me. Every day she helps me without even meaning to. She's the person I come to, the person I tell everything. She's almost always there when I need her. And I'm always thanking her and telling her how much I love her. I want more than anything to meet her someday and I have a feeling we will.

I truly don't think I would still be here if it weren't for her. Every time I let myself get to that place, she would talk to me until I listened. I'm always blaming myself, I'm always apologizing, I'm always torturing myself and focusing on taking care of and loving others instead of myself, even when I know I shouldn't. She's tried to help me see that and sometimes it actually works. She would snatch that knife right out of my hand with her words. If I even thought about diving off of the roof, she would catch me in her support. There were some times where I almost went through with it and I felt guilty for not having told her, but she didn't care. She just wanted me to tell her next time if I felt myself going down that road again. She said "That doesn't matter anymore. What matters is you're here." She's my friend, my one and only friend. Sometimes I need her more than I need myself.

Somedays, Kate would try to encourage me to save up for a meet and greet with Millie. Other days, she would try to talk some sense into me but in the nicest, most Kate way possible. I hadn't told her and I don't know why, but I have actually been saving up. I've been saving up ever since I got back from Brazil. I had already missed what was probably one of my only opportunities to meet her. You see, she came to my home city, New York, where she met fans at her Florence

pop-up shop while I was still in Brazil. I was devastated. I thought my life was over. August 25, that was the day I missed my chance. I will never forget that day.

When I returned to New York, nothing had changed. I was hoping it would, but it didn't. I fell back into my old routine of moping around the house, listening to sad songs on a repeat, messing with my phone all day, and screwing up my sleep schedule. It was self-sabotage I guess you could say. I don't like myself, so this is my self-punishment I guess, or maybe it's just a bad habit, I don't know.

I was dreading my birthday because I knew that it wasn't going to be anything special. I didn't have any plans. Not a thing to do or a person to be with. It might as well have just been any other day on the calendar, or so I thought...

I told Kate the same, but she suggested that I make my own plans, that I do something I normally wouldn't, just for the hell of it. I liked that idea, but the problem was, I didn't know what I wanted to do or where to go. I thought about it for a while and just resorted to going to Coney Island by myself. It wasn't much, but at least it was something.

I got there around noon. I was surrounded by all kinds of smells-fried Oreos, funnel cake, burgers, fries, hotdogs, the ocean, cigarette smoke, trash, and unfortunately, body odor. That was New York for you. It was a little bit of everything, but sometimes that wasn't always a good thing. I hated it there. It had its moments, but ultimately I wanted nothing more than to leave.

I walked around a bit. I couldn't remember the last time I had been there, but I was able to find my way around okay. It started off a bad day, as most do. I hit the beach first and usually, the ocean has a way of calming me, but I quickly got bored with it, as it was nothing compared to the ones I had seen in Brazil. It was all just one big lie. The water was filthy and it was crowded. It felt like no one who was there actually wanted to be, well, except for maybe the little kids who didn't know any better.

Instead, I walked over to Little Odessa's Brighton Beach, which is supposed to be cleaner and free, but that only made matters worse. It



made me feel even more alone because I really thought I saw Millie, only to realize that it was just a figment of my imagination. And to top all of that off, a seagull pooped on my brand new shirt. So much for that!

So, then I went to Tototonno's for a slice or two of pizza. (People say it's some of the best pizza you'll find in NYC) I'm not gonna lie, it was good, like really really good, but I still burned my tongue on it and it didn't cheer me up at all. It didn't fill that hole in my heart. I didn't expect it to, but I thought it would help. News flash- it didn't.

So far, that fried Oreos I had after lunch was the best part of my day. It could only get better from there, right? So, I hopped in line for the Thunderbolt, which had a 90-degree vertical drop and a 100-foot vertical loop. I'm a ride or die, all the way.

I was halfway through the line when all of a sudden, I had a feeling. I heard girls squealing and saw people running and gathering in a frenzy. I wanted to know what the hell was going on, but I didn't want to lose my spot in line. It didn't take me long to figure out that it was somebody famous, and at first, I didn't really think anything of it, but once I finally caught a glimpse, I was in complete disbelief.

I stopped what I was doing and ran like I hadn't run in years. I didn't even give it one more thought, or any thought for that matter. I just ran.

And then I stopped and pinched myself, making sure I wasn't just daydreaming again. Then, I tapped some random girl on the shoulder and asked:

"I-Is that- Is it-?"

"Millie," she finished, with a look that told me she had no reason to lie.

## 2. For He's A Jolly Good Fellow

I tried to keep my composure, but on the inside, I was an emotional trainwreck. I was losing my actual shit! I was only a few feet away and already, my heart was practically jumping out of my chest and my eyes were drowning in tears of joy. My conscience was telling me to cut in front of these people. I needed this the most, but I put other people's happiness before my own. I'm too respectful to get into that kind of antics anyway and besides, I don't want Millie to get the wrong impression. I want to make a good first impression.

So, I stood nearby, not taking my eyes off of her once until I started to see her head out. Then, I would make my move. I did this 1. because I wasn't emotionally prepared enough yet and 2. because I didn't want to be replaced by the presence of others next in line. I wanted to be the last person she saw, so I was fresh in her mind.

She thought she was so clever. She thought she could fool me with that disguise...Oh, please! I saw right through that. I'd recognize that voice anywhere! I couldn't forget the way it sounded even if I tried.

My palms were sweaty and I was shaking really badly. My throat was tight and warm like I was about to burst into tears any second. I felt butterflies throughout my whole body. I had dreamt of this day my whole life and yet I couldn't think of one thing I wanted to say to her.

Next thing I knew, she was leaving. At first, I gave her a little breathing room from her last fan encounter, but then, the anticipation getting to me like a bad dream, I bolted towards her. I couldn't think straight, but I tried to configure my thoughts the best I could. So, I took a deep breath and thought to myself: Here goes nothing!

"MILLIE?" I half yelled as I approached her slowly.

She turned around almost immediately, as did her team of people. Her deer-like alertness, that look in her eyes in response to her name, it was all a little hard for me to take in. This was really happening- I was finally about to meet the love of my life.

"H-Hi," I said, hands in my pockets.

"Hello," she replied with a polite smile.

"Sorry to bother you. I know you're heading out, but I just wanted a minute of your time and then I swear, I'll leave you be."

"You're fine! Go ahead."

But then something weird happened. I got nervous. The world started to go fuzzy and I started to blackout. I was way too familiar with this feeling. I was always having dizzy spells when I was overwhelmed with thoughts of Millie. And sure enough, I collapsed to the ground.

"Oh my god! Is he okay?" she asked, running over to my side.

She squatted down to my level and lightly shook me until I started to regain consciousness.

"He-He's waking up, someone get him some water!"

"Millie?" I weakly whispered.

"Yes, it's me. Are you alright? You had quite the fall there!"

"Yeah, I-I think so."

"Here, sit up slowly and have some water," she said, grabbing the bottle from her manager's hands.

"Okay. Thank you!"

"Sure thing," she said.

And so I did just that as we sat by side on a bench.

"Millie?"

"Yes?"

"I know I don't have a lot of time with you, but-"

"\*touches arm\* This isn't a meet and greet. There's no rush! Just say

however much you want to say. I'm not going anywhere until I know you're okay," she said sweetly.

Electricity. That was what I felt when she touched me. Tingling volts that crept under my skin and shocks that popped up in chill bumps on my arms.

"Where to start... \*ponders, takes deep breath\* I know I'm never going to get to tell you all of the things I want to because my feelings for you are endlessly complicated, but Millie, I love you and what you do for this world more than you could possibly know. You are so kind, compassionate, and selfless! You are my everything and I know you must get this all the time, but I am in love with you and I would give anything to date you. I do realize that you're a celebrity, so the likelihood of you dating a fan is more than slim, especially these days, so I'm not going to ask that of you, but just know that there's nothing I wouldn't give to be with you. You've always come first in my mind and there's nothing I wouldn't do for you. You just have the best personality! You're so charismatic. Honestly, I mean, you're just the most beautiful, amazing girl I've ever laid eyes on...And I will never forget this moment till the day I die."

She blushed and with almost teary eyes said:

"I don't even know what to say to that... \*chuckles\* I kind of feel like I should snap or something because something about you and everything you just said is so raw and poetic even! \*cracks a smile\*"

"You're even funnier in person!"

"\*smiles\* Oh, stop it already!" she teased.

"No, but really, that means so much to me. Thank you...for everything," she continued.

"You're thanking me?! I'm the one who should be thanking you for making my dreams come true and for just being you," I said.

"\*smiles\* I probably should've asked this before, \*chuckles\* but what's your name?"

"John."

"Well, it's a pleasure to meet you, John," she said, shaking his hand.

"Oh, the pleasure is all mine!" I said. (She giggled.)

For some reason, even just shaking her hand made my eyes water like when you're cutting an onion. She actually took notice, much to my surprise.

"Oh, you want a hug, I can tell. C'mere!" she said.

I will never forget the feeling of her arms wrapped around my neck and her chest against mine. It was so soft, warm, and long-lasting. The feeling lingered in my body even after she had already let go.

"Well, I hate to cut this short, but I really should be going. I do want to make sure we get a picture together first. It wouldn't be fair to leave without doing that."

"Thank you! Really, I can't thank you enough. You have no idea how much this means to me."

"You are very welcome! \*pauses\* Now, what shall we do? Selfie first, professional photo next?"

"Sh-Sh-Sure."

"Alright, then," she said, leaning closer to me as she held my phone in her lavender-manicured hands and snapped a picture of the two of us together, smiling.

My whole life flashed before my eyes, so to speak, and the next thing I knew, we were posing for a second picture, this time taken by her agent. She stuck her cheek out toward my face, knowing exactly what classic Stranger Con Meet & Greet pose I had in mind- the cheek kiss. I could just feel her father glaring at me with his arms crossed and a frown on his face, but I ignored him. In fact, I ignored everyone when she was around.

"It was so nice to meet you, John! Take care," she said.

"Well, I could say the same about you. Meeting you is the best birthday present I could ever ask for!"

"Wait, it's your birthday?"

"It sure is."

"Hold on just a second..." she said, turning to consult with her team.

\*whispers cease\*

"So, I don't normally do this, but just since it's your birthday and you've been so kind to me, I'm going to spend the whole day with you, free of charge."

"You're joking..."

"I wouldn't joke about this," she said seriously.

"Holy shit! I can't believe this is actually happening..."

"Before I devote my day to making yours, I do feel like you should know that I'm not very comfortable with or thrilled by the idea of dating a fan. But I want to be very clear: This \*bounces finger back and forth\* isn't a date. I'm afraid I just can't go out with you. Don't take it personally, it's not you. It's not even just for safety reasons, I just think it's weird to date someone who already knows everything about you when you don't know anything about them. Not only that, it's already hard enough to date other celebrities without making headlines...Imagine what dating a fan would do! \*sighs\* I'm not telling you all of this to bum you out, I just want to make sure we understand each other. I don't want to have any problems."

"You don't have to explain yourself, Millie. I understand. I knew it was too good to be true, but I want whatever you want and I'm just thankful that you're spending time with me at all."

"Good, I'm glad to hear that. Well, before we start celebrating, you're going to have to go through a screening process first, just to make sure you're not a crazy stalker fan and everything, even though I can tell that you're not."

"Whatever it takes, I'm willing to do it."

"Okay, first, you're going to have to forfeit your phone to Dariq over

there. Sorry, it's protocol. It won't be long. Probably about 5 minutes or so, just to make sure you haven't been plotting my death or anything extreme like that. \*laughs\*

"Okay, sure, no problem," I said, handing it over.

"Great, and then they'll need to make sure you don't have anything like a concealed weapon on you."

"Of course! I've got nothing to hide," I said, stepping up to the man with the metal detector who scanned my person and patted my clothes.

"Here's your phone," said Millie. "And you're almost done. Now, they just have to ask you some questions to get an idea of who you are and what your intentions are with me, if any."

"Alright, that's not too bad."

"You're a good sport."

"Thanks."

"You're welcome."

"Wish me luck," I said, as if I was just about to take a standardized test that would determine my whole future.

"Fingers crossed," she said.

The process was quick up until this point, but the questions were never-ending and very personal. It almost felt like an interrogation, they even hooked me up to a lie detector machine for Christ's sake, but I got through it and passed with flying colors.

"So, what do you wanna do first?" I asked.

"Oh no, no, no! You're awfully sweet, but this is your day. We're gonna do whatever you wanna do."

"I mean, I don't really have any preference or plans, but maybe we could just hang out here for a bit and then go somewhere else."

"Sounds like a plan," she said.

"Well, shall we?"

"Sure!"

It was hard to get used to the feeling of being followed by her team every few feet or so, but I knew that was just a part of it. She's a very popular person and that has its consequences, even though it's not a bad thing at all.

"So, tell me a little bit about yourself, John."

"What do you wanna know?"

"I don't know...Your likes, your dislikes, what your family's like, what you're passionate about- just anything really."

"Well, I'm from Queens. I'm an only child and...my family's from Brazil."

"Ooh, I love Brazil! That's probably one of my favorite places to go to comic con. The people are so loving!"

"Yeah, we're some of your biggest fans, that's for sure."

"Definitely and it's just so beautiful there too!"

"Oh, believe me, I know!"

"Well, that's really cool. Tell me more..."

"Really?"

"Yeah, c'mon! I like to know what makes people tick."

"Well, I'm really into sports. I play basketball...and the guitar too...I'm not very good though, but I try to play it anyway."

"Aww, I'm sure that's not true! You're probably much better at it than you think. \*pauses\* What kind of songs do you like to play?"

"Well, I'm really into '80s music, but when I play the guitar, it's more



love songs and Nirvana. I don't listen to Nirvana religiously or anything, but there are several of their songs that really speak to me. I relate to Kurt Kobain a lot."

"That's really neat!"

"Yeah," I said with a smile, still kind of in disbelief about it all.

First, we stopped by a couple of booths with county-fair type games. Playing basketball myself, I decided to give the game "Hot Shots" a try. I wanted to win something for her more than anything, but why would she want some crappy stuffed animal anyway? She deserves much better than I could ever give her, but I tried anyway, thinking that maybe it would win me some points not only in the game, but with her too. I wanted to impress her in some way, but how the fuck do you impress the one and only teen actor prodigy, Millie Bobby Brown? Anything I can do, she could do better. That's what I like about her. She proves exactly how girls can do anything that boys can and maybe even more! However, all of those doubts started to fade as we both spotted a gigantic plush whale hanging from the booth.

I attempted to win the game with the uttermost intensity, but I was not successful. I had failed. I felt ashamed of myself and she started to take notice.

"Hey, it's okay! You'll get it next time, I know it," she said, rubbing my arm.

I guess I never realized how touchy she really was. I had noticed it in interviews, particularly with Finn and Noah and I was always kind of jealous of them for that reason, but actually being around her was a whole 'nother story. It soon became clear that she was only like that around the people that made her feel comfortable. She'd only known me for a few minutes, yet somehow, it felt like we'd known each other for years. I wish I had more people like that in my life sometimes.

"So, how old are you turning today?"

"17."

"Oh wow. Almost an adult! That's exciting...You fooled me. I thought you were much older."

"Yeah, I get that a lot."

"It's not a bad thing. I like to think of it as your inner maturity showing on the outside."

"Well, I have to say, that is the biggest compliment coming from you!"

"How do you mean?"

"You're just so poised and responsible and elegant and professional...and you can stop me any time...and-"

"\*chuckles\* You're quite the catch, aren't you, John?"

"I don't know, you tell me."

\*laughs\*

As we walked around, I stumbled upon "Spook-A-Rama," turned to her and asked:

"Feeling brave today?"

"Oh no, no...I don't do scary rides."

"What are you afraid of? It's not like there are any bungalows in there!"

"Hey!" she said, playfully hitting me.

"Don't worry, I'll protect you."

"Okay..." she said hesitantly, but willingly.

"Two tickets please," she said.

"Alright, that'll be \$15."

"I got this," I said.

"No, no, allow me," she replied, showing the ticket man nothing but the eyes behind her sunglasses.

That was all they needed to see. Her eyes were the key to her identity. That stare was unmistakably Eleven's and could get her in for free anywhere of her choice.

[On the ride]

There were zombies, a demon coming at us with an ax, and even a man in a straight jacket being electrically shocked. It was quite a thrill! Millie thought so too, as she jumped into my lap, practically holding onto me the entire time, but I didn't mind. If anything, I felt a rush. I had feelings I didn't know what to do with but wanted to act on more than anything.

After the ride ended, we had our hearts set on getting a ride in on the ferris wheel and so we did. Once we reached the top, she said:

"Hey, John?"

"Yeah?"

"You know earlier, how you said that you relate to Kurt Kobain?"

"Yeah."

"How do you relate to him?"

"\*pauses\* I-I struggle with depression...and his lyrics are just so raw and honest. Sometimes it helps, but of course, those feelings never go away completely."

"I'm sorry if I kind of put you on the spot, but I appreciate you opening up to me about that. I know those things aren't always easy to talk about."

"No, it's-it's okay. You're the one person I've been dying to talk to about anything...I'd rather it be personal than small talk anyway."

"\*sighs\* I'm sure you have it worse than I do, but I have a lot of down days too and some anxiety issues as well..."

"I don't know how you could possibly feel bad. You just seem like you have it all together, like you have everything going for you and the world at your fingertips."

"I don't, I can promise you that...I just, I don't know- It's like, I feel good about myself and my fans are such dedicated, wonderful people, but some of them end up being a bad egg and will bully me online. I'm sure you knew about that though, it was kind of a hot topic for a while..."

"I did know about it, but I never got to hear your side of the story until now."

"Yeah, it can be really rough sometimes, but I know that so many people are going through much worse than me. I can't even imagine some of the things my fans sacrifice just to meet me once for only several minutes!"

"Even a few seconds with you would be worth a lifetime of bliss..."

\*blushes like El at the Snow Ball\*

\*gets off of ride, continues talking while walking\*

"I'm always trying to help people feel good in their own skin, you know?" she said.

"I know, that's probably what I love about you most."

"Well, thank you, I try. I just- I want everyone to feel like they are worth it and that they are a necessity to this world, in spite of all of the hate."

"\*sniffles\* I'm sorry, Millie..."

"Sorry? Sorry for what?" she asked concerned and confused, her brows knit together.

"I've failed you...I don't feel worthy or comfortable in my own skin...I don't even like myself."

"Aww, John, don't say that!"

"But it's true!"

"I don't understand how you could possibly feel that way. You're such a kind soul and a deep thinker. You're easy to talk to and you're dependable. You're just so reflective and such a unique individual! I would never want you to think otherwise."

"That's what Kate's always telling me."

"Kate? Who's Kate?"

"Kate, oh, she's- I don't even know how to describe Kate...She's my best friend, my sister, and sometimes, the only person who understands me or who I can talk to. She's just so sweet and empathetic and always knows how to make me feel better."

"I like this Kate already..."

"She's a lovely singer and an incredible writer too! She writes Mileven fanfiction and it's one of the best things I've ever read. She wants to be a screenwriter someday and I just know that she will. Oh, and she has a fan account too!"

"Really? What is it? I'll follow her right now."

"Yeah, oh my gosh, we *HAVE* to FaceTime her! She would totally flip! She loves you so much...I know it would mean everything to her."

"Then, let's do it!"

"Okay, here, let me give you her username first."

"Okay."

"It's youdontmessaroundwithmileven, but you can just search for it on my profile since it's so long."

"That's so clever!"

"Just wait until you see her posts..."

Just as Millie and I were going through some of Kate's posts and

liking and commenting on them, Kate was sitting in her hotel room in Indiana, putting the finishing touches on a fanfiction story she wrote for and surprised me with on my birthday. Too caught up in her chapter and Spotify playlist to answer the phone, she failed to notice my gazillion texts. I didn't want to tell her directly that I was with Millie because I wanted it to be a surprise, so I just told her that I had some big news to tell her. I tried to spam her with texts so she couldn't see her Instagram notifications just yet. At some point or another, she flipped her phone over and decided to call me, as she had already told me she was going to do. I asked Millie to stand there and not say anything at first, but that I would give her a signal when I wanted her to talk.

As her name popped up across my phone screen, I swiped to the right with a big smile on my face. This was actually the first time we had ever talked over the phone, which made it all even more exciting. I just wish that she could've actually been there, but at the same time, she was always with me, no matter what or where I was.

"Hey, Kate! How are you, love?" I asked.

"HAAAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU, HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU, HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR JO-OHN, HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!" she sang.

"Wow, you weren't kidding!" Millie whispered.

"Shhh shhh shhh," I whistled through my teeth in shaky laughter.

"I hope you've been having an amazing day! Oh, wait, is this a bad time?" she asked me.

"You have no idea..." I said, eyeing Millie. "And you're totally fine! Now's a great time! Thank you for blessing me with your beautiful voice."

"Aww, stop!" she said. "What are you up to?"

"Oh, nothing much, just um, hanging out at Coney Island."

"Nice! Are you there with a friend?"

"Yeah, you could say that..." I said coyly.

"Okay... \*chuckles\*" she said.

"Did you get my messages?"

"I saw that you texted me, but I thought I'd just call you instead, so I never got the chance to read them. Why? What's up?"

"Just switch to FaceTime and I'll tell you everything."

"John, you're freaking me out...Is everything okay?"

"Kate, I need you to trust me," I said, hoping Millie would notice the El parallel I just made.

"Ah, Stranger Things! You sure know the way to my heart now, don't you?" said Kate.

"I sure do," I said.

"Alright, well, I'm gonna hang up now and call you right back, okay?"

"Sounds like a plan," I said.

[10 seconds later]

"Hey!" she said, with a big smile on her face that I knew would grow even bigger by the time I was finished telling her what I was about to tell her.

"Hey!" I said back.

"So, what's the big news?! I'm dying to know!" she said.

"Okay, I'll tell you, but first, check your Instagram."

"Why...?"

"Just do it! You'll see."

"If you say so!"

Millie and I both cracked a smile as we heard her gasp through the phone, saying:

"No. way. HOLY SHIT!"

"What?!" I asked.

"This isn't happening...Oh my god, John, this can't be real!"

"What? What is it?" I asked, Millie and I laughing away from the microphone.

"I-I think Millie just followed me..."

"You're joking!"

"No, I'm totally serious! Hang on I'll send you the screenshots."

"Did she like any of your posts or anything?"

"I don't know, hold on..."

"Okay."

"ARE YOU FUCKING SERIOUS?! \*squeals\* OH MY GOD, I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS! I'M SHAKING SO HARD RIGHT NOW!"

"I'm gonna take that as a yes," I said, laughing.

"I'm literally crying right now...She liked a ton of my posts and even commented on some of them."

"That's so crazy!"

"Okay, what's wrong with you?" she asked.

"What do you mean what's wrong with me?" I asked.

"How are you not freaking out right now?! The love of your life just followed me on Instagram and you could not be less enthused!"

"I don't know, I guess I'm just in shock."

"Wait a minute..." she said.

"Yeah?"



"You're the one who told me to check Instagram...Do you know something I don't?"

"OH MY GOD, OH MY GOD, OH MY GOD...HOLD THAT THOUGHT! MILLIE JUST DMED ME!" she continued.

"HURRY! THE ANTICIPATION IS KILLING ME!" I said.

"I'M TRYING!" she said.

"What'd you say to her?" I whispered to Millie.

She tilted her phone screen towards me, revealing her text, which said:

"Hi, Kate! I've heard so much about you! Come back to FaceTime so we can talk."

So, as we patiently waited for her to put the pieces together, Millie got into position, gesturing for me to hand her my phone.

\*FaceTime unpauses\*

"OH MY GOD! OH MY GOD! OH MY GOD! MILLIE...AND JOHN?! I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS! OH MY GOD, HI, I LOVE YOU SO MUCH! SORRY, I HAVE NO CHILL RIGHT NOW, BUT I SWEAR, I'M USUALLY A LOT CALMER THAN THIS!"

"\*giggles\* Aww, you're such a dear!" said Millie.

"I could say the same about you! You're the most wonderful person, all around! You're so gifted in so many ways and have accomplished so much for your age. You're such a blessing to this world and an inspiration to so many like myself. I just love how you strive to make a difference in young people's lives and get behind so many important issues. You're so mature and professional for your age and I admire your work so much. For such a lovely person, you still manage to make time for your fans. You're so elegant and beautiful too and I could just go on and on about you, but I don't want to take away from your time together, but I just love you so so much!" said Kate.

"Oh my gosh, I love you too! You are such an angel! John is so lucky to have a friend like you. You've helped him so much. I'm really looking forward to keeping up with your account and reading your stories."

"OH MY GOD, SERIOUSLY?! I WOULD DIE! It's like actually my dream to cast you in a screenplay that I write someday!"

"John's been telling me you wanna become a screenwriter someday, is that right?"

"Yes! It's my dream."

"Well, it's a good thing I followed you because I have lots of connections in that industry, the biggest ones being The Duffer Brothers themselves..."

"OH MY GOD, I LOVE THEM!"

"I'll make sure to put a good word in for you and maybe arrange a meeting."

"Millie, I can't thank you enough! I owe you so much! Believe me when I say that I'm going to make 11 appreciation posts for you tomorrow!"

"\*giggles\* Oh, I don't doubt it!"

"John, you still there?" Kate asked.

"Yes, I'm still here."

"Sorry, \*chuckles\* I got a little carried away for a moment there...I promise I won't hijack anymore of your time with her."

"Don't be sorry! I would've done the same thing and besides, I wanted to share this moment with you, even if you couldn't actually be here."

"I literally love you so much!"

"I love you too!"

"This is one of the sweetest things anyone's ever done for me...I thought I could top you with the gift I made you, but I don't think anything could be better than this!"

"Aww, don't say that! I would love anything from you, you know that..."

"It's just gonna seem really lame now, but just check the fanfic group chat when you get home and it's all there waiting for you."

"Okay, I will."

"Call me back when you do because I want to see your reaction."

"I got you," I said.

"Sweet, well, I'll leave you be. Just do me a favor and have an amazing time with her and just be your amazing self, okay?"

"You can bet on it," I said.

"Wait, sorry, real quick- How did all of this happen?"

"I went to Coney Island for the day and she just happened to be there of all places!"

"Wow! That's-That's wonderful! Well, you had a feeling and you were right, you were right this whole time!"

"Haha, quoting Hopper, I see."

"I wondered if you would catch that," she said.

"Well, Millie, it was so nice meeting you! That's a great guy you have next to you."

"Lovely meeting you too, Kate! I hope to see you in the tv studio someday."

"Aww, thank you so much! Bye, guys!" she said, waving and crying tears of joy as we both hung up.

"\*laughs\* She's so sweet! I'm so glad that you have a good friend like

her in your life."

"\*laughs\* Yeah, she's the best."

\*laughter fades\*

"John?"

"Yeah?"

"You know what I said earlier about this not being a date?"

"Yeah."

"Well, forget what I said."

"But I thought-"

"Look, \*looks to her left and right, says softly\* I can't promise I'll date you, but I will agree to a first date, as long as we keep it casual and between you and me."

"What-What changed your mind?"

"I don't know, maybe it's the fact that I'm lonely and you're lonely too or maybe it's just that you know what you want and you're not afraid to ask for it and I find that really attractive. You're not the type of guy I usually go for, but I like you and even though you're a fan and dating a fan goes against my own beliefs, I don't know, I'm feeling a little...spontaneous."

"So, we're really doing this, you and me? Just for today?"

"Yeah."

"This is the happiest day of my life..." I said, tearing up a little.

She wiped my tears away and hugged me. It was tight and intimate, just as I had always imagined it would be. I felt so shiny and new, just as the songs say and it was just so uplifting for me. There weren't many things that made me feel that way.

Millie tried to convince me to leave, but I instead said:

"Oh, no, no, no, no! I'm not going anywhere until I win you that fucking whale!"

"You're crazy!"

"Yeah, well, we both know that's what makes you crazy...Blank, I mean."

\*smiles\*

And so I threw, ball after ball, scoring each time. This time, I had no nerves around her, only feelings of excitement.

"Nice shot! Pick the plush of your choice," said the carnie.

"We'll take that big whale up there," I said, with Millie clinging onto my arm.

Carrying the whale under her arm and walking beside me, she said:

"Thank you."

"For what?" I asked.

"For everything! You've been so sweet to me tonight, I don't know how to thank you." (I smiled.)

"Just treating you how you should always be treated." (She smiled.)

I swear to you, nearly the second that I gestured to hold Millie's hand and she nodded in agreement, a swarm of TMZ reporters ambushed us with their cameras. There was about a 2 minute period somewhere in between where I was just as thick as a thief, obsessing over the feeling of her fingers between mine, but it was short-lived, as someone had tweeted a picture of Millie in Coney Island and all hell broke loose.

Among us were the rumbles of "MILLIE! MILLIE! MILLIE!" from every direction. Cameras flashing, voices booming- we were busted. They had caught onto us, but of course they saved the "juiciest" question for last.

"Millie, what brought you here to Coney Island with us this evening?"

"My sister's getting married and there's a bridal salon nearby. We decided to make a stop."

"Are you done shooting Enola Holmes?"

"Yes, we just finished not too long ago."

"Your co-star and romantic counterpart, Finn Wolfhard has just starred in two big blockbusters and is coming out with a third soon. What do you have to say to that? Have you seen his movies?"

"Yes, I have seen both and I'm very proud of him. Now, I must get going. No more questions please."

"But you haven't introduced us to your friend here! Are you guys dating? Is he your boyfriend?"

"She said leave her alone, buddy!" I said, shoving a reporter out of the way.

"C'mon, let's get out of here," I continued.

"Where?"

"Anywhere you want!"

"But where do you wanna go?"

"I'm really fighting the urge to take you to a diner...and on a hike. Does that sound like something you would like to do?"

"I would *love* that!"

"Then let's do it!" I said, grabbing her hand and holding it in mine.

And we did just that, well, not the hike part, as the nearest mountain was about an hour away and her team would see to it that she got on her plane on time, or else, so they told me. But the diner was... something else! It was family-owned, with checkered tile floors, jukebox, and all! New York diners were finer than any other state's.

There was something so classic about them and I think she liked its nostalgic quality.

When we parted, it was hard for me. No, hard doesn't cut it. It was harder than *anything* I'd ever had to do.

"I have to go, John..."

"But why? Can't you just stay a little longer?"

"Because I have billions of people counting on me and looking up to me and I can't disappoint them. I could never deal with that kind of guilt."

"I understand, but I don't wanna let go," I said, leaning my forehead against hers, my hands on her hips.

"I don't either, but we must," she said, getting up.

"I will always love you," I said.

"I will never forget you, John Natividade."

"Tell me this isn't the end..."

"John, I had a great time. I don't think I've had this much fun in a long time and I can assure you, this isn't the last you'll see of me."

"But how do you know, Millie?"

"John, I need you to trust me," she said with a lot of eye contact and a little smile that made me melt.

"\*kisses cheek\* Goodbye, John," she said, getting up and walking out the door.

*Oh, here come the waterworks*, I thought to myself, and sure enough, I was right. She goodbye Miked me and there was no coming back from that.

I walked down the street, sulking. I don't even remember or know how I made it home that night. It was all a blur. I think I came home

in even worse shape than when I had left it, but then I sat myself down, grabbed a pen and a journal, and got writing. I wrote and wrote until the words started to go fuzzy. I wanted to make sure I recorded every detail of that night so that I could cherish it forever for the days to come. And I went to sleep that night with the biggest smile on my face. The best way I can describe the way I felt was like when you finish the end of Stranger Things and you don't know whether to cry, put your fist through the wall, or smile and lose yourself in all of those wonderful moments that led up to the bittersweet ending. The only difference was this wasn't the end. This was just the beginning.



### 3. Unattainable Is The Dream I Chase

Previously...on the saga of John & Millie, the *other* Jillie:

"Tell me this isn't the end..."

"John, I had a great time. I don't think I've had this much fun in a long time and I can assure you, this isn't the last you'll see of me."

"But how do you know, Millie?"

"John, I need you to trust me," she said with a lot of eye contact and a little smile that made me melt.

"\*kisses cheek\* Goodbye, John," she said, getting up and walking out the door.

*Oh, here come the waterworks*, I thought to myself, and sure enough, I was right. She goodbye Miked me and there was no coming back from that.

I walked down the street, sulking. I don't even remember or know how I made it home that night. It was all a blur. I think I came home in even worse shape than when I had left it, but then I sat myself down, grabbed a pen and a journal, and got writing. I wrote and wrote until the words started to go fuzzy. I wanted to make sure I recorded every detail of that night so that I could cherish it forever for the days to come. And I went to sleep that night with the biggest smile on my face. The best way I can describe the way I felt was like when you reach the end of *Stranger Things 3* and you don't know whether to cry, put your fist through the wall, or smile and lose yourself in all of those wonderful moments leading up to the bittersweet ending. The only difference was this wasn't the end. This was just the beginning.

[Possible Ending #1]

But then I woke up. It was all just a lucid dream, one big web of

disappointment and lies. I never went to Coney Island, I never met Millie, and I never took her out on a date, but I also did. All of those things happened, just not in my waking life. Somehow, it felt more real than reality itself.

Normally, knowing my terrible tendency to break when I am beaten down time after time, I expected nothing less than to have a full-on mental breakdown, to wallow and sink down into a pit of self-hatred and despair that was too deep to dig my way out of. My frustration with myself and the lack of reciprocated love I have in my life was always so intense to the point that it was unbearable, but this time was different. Odd enough as it is, I had this slight sense of relief, like a burden had been lifted from me. For the longest time, I couldn't put my finger on why that was, but then I remembered what Kate had said. I remembered all of the things that we had talked about- I remembered when she had mentioned that it seemed like getting closure was what I needed most to get past all of this. And for me, this was just that...

I had told Millie how I felt and based on the way things played out, I know that if I was ever to meet her for real at a meet & greet, she wouldn't actually date me no matter how great of a first impression I made. Even though we ended up going on a date in the dream, she had standards and dreams are dreams for a reason. They reveal our subconscious thoughts and desires, telling us to pay more attention to them in our waking life. Ultimately, they aren't meant to indicate the likelihood of something happening, and as much as I wanted to believe that I would be able to change her mind about dating me, I knew deep down that it would never happen. Yet, I still got to live out that fantasy of dating her, I still got to be with her in an intimate way.

There is a scientifically significant incident where a man had a lucid dream about another man whom he had never met and one day they ran into each other in real life. One of them described their dream and the other man said "I know this dream" because he too had experienced and dreamt it. That gave me hope that maybe, just maybe, I had actually connected with Millie on some subconscious level and that she too had with me. I felt some comfort in knowing that.

Being with Millie, I had lived out that fantasy. It was time for a new one. I was ready to move on. I will always love Millie, that's never going to change, but I no longer felt the need to center my life around her and only her. I realized that the combination of my wanting to find love with someone and actually being in love with Millie blinded me to the fact that there could be more beyond her. I invested myself in this idea that she was the only one for me, that no one could ever fill her shoes, but it was a little naive of me to think that just because I loved her, she was the only person I had a chance at love with, especially since the opposite was true. I felt no hatred towards Millie, if anything I felt the opposite, but I was tired of my feelings for her enhancing my depression and compromising my ability to date other people.

Kate and I are both hopeless romantics. We have that in common. We both feel lonely more often than not and want more for ourselves. It was rare when people came our way and we've struggled to find a relationship that was worthwhile, but we're not completely alone. We have each other and that's how we've managed to get through it.

She was always telling me that you don't just find love. It's not that simple. If you're patient and hopeful, *it* will find *you*. Love will come. I love her outlook on things. She certainly has a good head on her shoulders.

None of these realizations happened overnight...Oh, no, it was much more complicated than that. I failed more times than I can count, but when I really put my mind to it, I was successful. I worked and worked at self-care and self-love, always trying to find new ways to feel better about myself. I stopped blaming myself for the things that I couldn't control and started focusing on the things that I could. I refrained from asking myself "What if" at all costs, as it always affected me in the worst ways. I no longer felt the need to fixate on the past, but rather the now- I began paying attention to what *I* wanted and not just *who* I wanted or wanted to be for *them*.

None of this cured anything. I was still depressed, that wasn't going to change, but I was discovering new ways to heal and recover, new ways to seal my many internal wounds. Those thoughts that were once chained to my mind like a wrecking ball, wiping out nearly every chance I had at happiness with such swinging ease- they started

to fade more and more. I almost felt free!

Now, to me, Millie was the wallet in my pocket. She still followed me wherever I went, but I got so used to the feeling of carrying her with me that I was not always aware of her at every waking moment. She was accessible enough for me to whip out when I needed her, but hidden enough so that I wasn't as tempted to spend my money, or in this case, my time, thinking about her.

I don't know what this next chapter of my life will look like. I don't know who I used to be and I don't know who I'm going to become, but I know what I am now- halfway happy.

## 4. Love Not Lost On Me

Previously...on the saga of John & Millie, the *other* Jillie:

"Tell me this isn't the end..."

"John, I had a great time. I don't think I've had this much fun in a long time and I can assure you, this isn't the last you'll see of me."

"But how do you know, Millie?"

"John, I need you to trust me," she said with a lot of eye contact and a little smile that made me melt.

"\*kisses cheek\* Goodbye, John," she said, getting up and walking out the door.

*Oh, here come the waterworks*, I thought to myself, and sure enough, I was right. She goodbye Miked me and there was no coming back from that.

I walked down the street, sulking. I don't even remember or know how I made it home that night. It was all a blur. I think I came home in even worse shape than when I had left it, but then I sat myself down, grabbed a pen and a journal, and got writing. I wrote and wrote until the words started to go fuzzy. I wanted to make sure I recorded every detail of that night so that I could cherish it forever for the days to come. And I went to sleep that night with the biggest smile on my face. The best way I can describe the way I felt was like when you reach the end of *Stranger Things 3* and you don't know whether to cry, put your fist through the wall, or smile and lose yourself in all of those wonderful moments leading up to the bittersweet ending. The only difference was this wasn't the end. This was just the beginning.

[Possible Ending #2]

"John, I don't know if you remember me. Everyone else seems to have

forgotten, but this is Millie Bobby Brown, you know, your favorite actress who plays Eleven in Stranger Things? The one who took you out on a date on your birthday? If I'm still in that head of yours, if you still remember who I am, please come find me at this address that I'm about to text you. I just...I need someone to talk to, face-to-face. You put me at ease and make me feel so safe and comfortable and I really need that right now. I'm just so alone in this world. I don't know how to not be a celebrity and have my work recognized. On the chance that you don't remember, you can just delete this message and go about with your day, but I really hope that you do."

That message. Those words. They ran through my head on a loop.

I never answered the phone if I didn't recognize the number. I had made that mistake one too many times, getting sucked into the personal lives of people who called my number thinking I was someone they knew, but of course, the one time I don't answer the phone, Millie calls! I had given her my number for emergencies, that way she didn't have to give away any personal information, but she would have mine if she ever needed or wanted it.

Now, I know, you're probably a little confused by the message she left, probably wondering why she was reminding me of who she was, concerned that I wouldn't remember her along with everyone else in the world. Well, you know that new movie "Yesterday," the one where everyone in the world forgets who The Beatles and Coke and other basic pop culture things are during a global blackout, all except for aspiring musician Jack Malik and a couple of other people? That same thing happened to me. The only difference was that Millie was cursed with the memory of who she used to be...What she didn't realize was what a blessing in disguise that can be, as opposed to not knowing your place in the world, like me.

The same thing happened to me. I never thought it could, I didn't even think it was remotely possible, but sure enough, it happened. In my case, I had been at the lowest of the low, the most depressed I had ever been, ever since we said our goodbyes. And these bad thoughts, as I call them, crept into my mind and slowly latched on, festering more and more, just like the Shadow Monster when he flayed Will. It got to the point where I couldn't take it anymore, where it was too much to handle, and so I passed out, just like I did

at Coney Island. And that was when it happened, when the world blacked out just as I myself did. It was then that Millie Bobby Brown, Stranger Things, and other widely known pop culture phenomena were wiped clean from the majority of our minds, all except for mine. I remembered and it pained me to see Millie in this state, but deep down, I knew that this was my chance and there was no holding back now.

Without giving it one more thought, I quickly packed my bags, grabbed some cash, took a bus to the airport, and hopped on the first plane to Atlanta. I was always nervous when it came to flights. The thought of going down like that terrified me more than taking matters into my own hands for some reason. I guess I just didn't like the idea of a sudden death, when you weren't expecting it. If I was going to die, I would wanna know. I would wanna prepare. In the event that something was to happen to me, I would wanna say my goodbyes. So, in preparation for this flight, I texted Kate and told her how much I loved and appreciated her. She was my family. My parents had lost the right to call me theirs...

There was a little turbulence that day, which didn't help calm my nerves at all...not one bit! But I got through it, and after making my way through security, I stood on a street corner and whistled with a purpose until a taxi finally came my way.

I gave him the address, realizing that this cab driver was about to drive to THE Millie Bobby Brown's house and he had no clue. Then again, he was totally oblivious to who she was to begin with, given that goddamn global blackout.

Her house was big and white, but a little less upscale than I was expecting it to be. I walked up to her doorstep, with a bouquet of pink knockout roses. The flowers were just like her: delicate, voluminous, full of life and color, and simply just beautiful...you might even say, a total knockout!

I took a deep breath, not knowing what would happen next. Would she still be sad about no one remembering her? Would she cry over my shoulder? Or would she just be happy to see me? Would she welcome me into her arms? Or none of the above. I had no way of knowing, but that was what excited me.

I stayed put for a second, trying to think of a cute way to "make an entrance" and then it came to me. I would knock on her door with the special knock that Hopper did in the show, you know, the one that said "us" in morse code. I just hoped she would get it.

\*answers door\*

"John?!" she said with her big, goofy, Millie smile.

"Millie..." I said, lost in her eyes.

"Hi, it's so wonderful to see you! How are you?" she asked, raising her shoulders as she leaned against the doorframe with crossed arms.

"I'm great now that you're here."

"Aww, that's sweet. \*pauses\* Are-Are those for me?"

"Oh, yeah! Do you like them?"

"Love them," she said, putting the flowers up to her nose to smell.

"I'm so glad."

Kate had learned very well that I have a very good sense of when something is off with people. I've always just had this natural ability to tell when people are in a funk or when something's getting them down. And so, looking at Millie, I noticed her smile start to fade and I couldn't help but wonder why.

"Millie, are you okay? What's wrong?" I asked putting a hand on her shoulder.

"\*sighs\* I just- I'm so bummed about this whole thing...It's like I used to have a purpose, I used to be something for everyone and now I'm just kind of chilling at home without any projects going on and \*sniffles\* it's-it's depressing."

"I totally get that...I always feel like that, the only difference is I've never had a purpose. I haven't found it yet at least..."

"You will, with time."



"I sure hope so...but Millie, you could always start over. You're lucky to have enough talent in you to start your career over as many times as you want and still be successful!"

"I appreciate that, John, but I don't have the patience in me to start from square 1 again. It took years before I even got a minor one-episode role in a show, let alone a lead! My family and I- we had very little for the longest time. They invested all of their time and money into my career and it was anything but easy...we struggled immensely. I could never put them through all of that again..."

"But the difference is that you know exactly how the acting business works. You know it inside out, better than anybody else your own age!"

"\*lip quivers, gets choked up\* That's the other thing is that it's not only me...Finn, Sadie, Noah, Gaten, Caleb- this affects all of them too! \*sobs\*"

"Aww, c'mere..." I said, bringing her forward into my chest and surrounding her in my arms.

With one hand holding my shoulder blade and the other wrapped around my neck, I could feel the warmth of her body radiating against mine. Though stiff as a board, we swayed in place, as she was so unsteady because of how distraught she felt. Teardrops soaked my shoulders, forming miniature puddles that bled through the top of my shirt sleeve. I rested my chin on her head and stroked her hair, bringing her comfort in this Pandora's box we had gotten ourselves into. Even though we weren't out of the woods yet, I never wanted this to end. This moment, this reunion.

\*pulls away\*

"Look, Millie. \*looks into eyes\* We'll figure this out. We'll do whatever we have to do. Hell, I'll even be your agent if you want!"

"\*giggles, wipes tears\* Thanks for cheering me up, but I think it's just out of our hands at this point."

"But Millie, we have to find a way to remind everyone of who you

are! I've given up on myself countless times...I'm not gonna let you do the same!"

"No! Don't you get it, John? This is the only way we can be together!"

"Wait, what?!"

"\*grabs chin\* I choose you. I choose us!"

"Out of all the people in the world, you choose me? Why? What good am I?"

"Because you cared about me enough to remember when no one else did."

The way she looked at me in that moment, I swear, it was the same way El looked at Mike after kissing him for the first time since their breakup- with nothing but love. And my eyes grew about 10 times their size once she leaned closer and closer, saying:

"\*shakes head while smiling\* I always knew it was you..."

The palm of her hand flat on my cheek, her fingers fanned out in twos, forming the Vulcan salute around my ear. I eyed her lips and before I knew it, our heads were turning like the tiny, rigged wheels inside a clock. At first, it was soft, like two maraschino cherries coming together, but then it turned into more, our hands grazing the backs of each other's necks in unison. Faces pressed, she hugged my neck just as I grabbed her waist, forming the most intimate embrace.

She pulled me inside by my shirt and shut the door behind us, reminding me of when Jonathan and Nancy got together at Murray's house...except without the sex part. We're a little young for that, but then again- technically they were too.

With Millie by my side, the world was our oyster. And so, later that day, we stopped by a café nearby, where we conversed and contemplated over coffee, which I, of course, paid for, now that I was the only one who knew who she truly was. We talked about a lot of things that day, but I finally convinced her to at least try to start over again. And not long after that, we took a nice, long drive and even went for a little hike. She was certainly the peak of my happiness...

I always want what I can't have and Millie was once that for me, but that was no longer true, as I had her and she had me...